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THE TRIAL OF

WILLIAM LEWIN,
ALIAS
WILLIAM HENRY CLARKE,
ALIAS
WILLIAM BROWN,
ALIAS
WILLIAM HUTCHINSON,
ALIAS
WILLIAM MAULE,
ALIAS
WILLIAM HOPE,

BEFORE THE
HONOURABLE EDWARD BEARCROFT,
HIS MAJESTY's CHIEF JUSTICE OF CHESTER,
AND
FRANCIS BURTON, Esq.
HIS MAJESTY's OTHER JUSTICE OF AND FOR THE SAID COUNTY,
ON MONDAY THE 18th OF APRIL, 1791,
FOR ROBBING THE
BOY WHO CARRIED THE MAIL
BETWEEN
WARRINGTON and NORTHWICH, in the county of CHESTER,
OF HIS
HORSE, and the BAG which contained the LETTERS from WARRINGTON to NORTHWICH,
On TUESDAY the 11th of MARCH, 1788.

As taken in Court.

Chester,
PRINTED BY J. FLETCHER, FOR J. POOLE.
[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

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BRITISH
MUSEUM

ON Monday the 18th of April, 1791, William Henry Clarke, otherwiſe William Lewin, otherwiſe William Brown, otherwiſe William Hutchinſon, otherwiſe William Maule, otherwiſe William Hope, was tried and convicted of robbing the mail, on Tueſday the 11th of March, 1788, on the road between Warrington and Northwich, in the county of Cheſter. —There were ſeveral indictments preferred againſt him for robbing different mails; which were all found by the Grand Jury, to be true bills; but the one upon which he was tried was verbatim as follows:

County palatine of Cheſter, to wit.

The Jurors for our Lord the King, upon their oath, preſent, that William Lewin, late of the pariſh of Great Budworth, in the county palatine of Cheſter, labourer, otherwiſe called William Henry Clarke, on the 11th day of March, in the 28th year of the reign of our ſovereign Lord George III. King of Great-Britain, &c. with force and arms, at the pariſh of Great Budworth, in the ſaid county, in the King's highway there, in and upon one James Archer, in the peace of God and our ſaid Lord the King, then and there being, feloniouſly did make an aſſault, and him the ſaid James Archer in bodily fear and danger of his life, in the highway aforeſaid, then and there feloniouſly did put; and one gelding, of the value of forty ſhillings, the property of one Thomas Berkenhead, and one leathern bag, of the value of one ſhilling, of the goods and chattels of our ſaid Lord the King, from the perſon, and againſt the will, of the ſaid James Archer, in the highway aforeſaid, then and there feloniouſly and violently did ſteal, take, lead, and carry away, againſt the peace of our ſaid Lord the King, his crown and dig-

nity. And the Jurors aforeſaid, upon their oath aforeſaid, further preſent, that the ſaid William Lewin, otherwiſe William Henry Clarke, on the ſaid 11th day of March, in the 28th year of his Majeſty aforeſaid, with force and arms, at the pariſh aforeſaid, in the county aforeſaid, in the King's highway, therein and upon one James Archer, in the peace of God and our ſaid Lord the King, then and there being, feloniouſly did make an aſſault, and him the ſaid James Archer in bodily fear and danger of his life, in the highway aforeſaid, then and there feloniouſly did put; and one gelding, of the value of forty ſhillings, and one leathern bag, of the value of one ſhilling, of the goods and chattels of the ſaid James Archer, in the highway aforeſaid, then and there feloniouſly and violently did ſteal, take, lead, and carry away, againſt the peace of our ſaid Lord the King, his crown and dignity, *&c.*

MILLS.

WITNESSES on the back of the indictment were:

James Archer,
John Shaw,
Samuel Watts,
George Roper,
William Hirſt,
Robert Jackſon,
William Barker,
William Sarrell.

Sworn and indorſed, by the Grand Jury, a true bill.

THE firſt witneſs called was James Archer, the boy who carried the mail. He ſaid, that on Tueſday the 11th of March, 1788; but on recollecting himſelf, ſaid, on Sunday night before he was robbed, as he was going along the road between Warrington and Northwich, the priſoner at the bar ſtopped him, and aſked particularly

larly at what time he ſhould return? He told him a wrong time, as he had ſome ſuſpicions of him. The next day (Monday) when he was juſt got out of the town of Warrington, a man came up to him, and offered him a guinea to let him ride behind him, on which he turned back to the inn, put up his horſe, and ſtayed till it was light; he then ſet out, and when he was got near to the place where he was ſtopt the preceding night, a man came running, and told him, he had a letter for him; but recollecting the voice to be the ſame as accoſted him there the night before, he puſhed forwards on full ſpeed.

On Tueſday morning the 11th, he ſet out, as uſual, from Warrington, and had not proceeded far before he overtook a waggon, which he accompanied till they came near to the place where he had been ſtopt before; and then a cart came up, which going faſter than the waggon, he kept company with it for upwards of half an hour, till they came near to Stretton, when the carter was joined by a man on foot, between whom ſome converſation paſſed; and the man went forwards. He left the cart; and in about half a mile further, a man run up to him, ſeized his horſe's bridle, and ſaid, *damn your eyes diſmount!* He had in his hand, when he ſtopt him, a piece of a rail, with a nail in the end of it; and likewiſe a piſtol, as he thinks. He demanded the bags; on which he gave him the pouch in which he carried the letters he collected on the road; he ſaid, *damn your eyes this is not what I want!* threw it down, and he began to examine on the other ſide, for the bag which contained the letters from Warrington to Northwich; he took the bag in one hand and the horſe in the other, and mounted, and rode off towards Northwich, the ſame way the witneſs was going; the priſoner looked back and ſaid, *damn your eyes turn back!* The witneſs ran after him ſome time, and ſaw the horſe

ſtop

ſtop at a trough where he had been uſually watered; the priſoner was fighting with the horſe to make him go on; but the horſe was reſtive, and would not proceed; by which delay the witneſs came nearly up to him, and called to a weaver to come to his aſſiſtance; he came, and ran after the priſoner, who was then on foot, and had left the horſe; the priſoner ran down a lane, and was ſoon out of ſight. The carter then came up and caught the horſe, and gave him to the witneſs; but he never ſaw the mail or the priſoner afterwards, till laſt March, when he ſaw him in the Caſtle of Cheſter, along with ſome other priſoners, when he immediately knew him to be the man who had robbed him, as he before related. He was deſired to go into a room where ſeveral priſoners were; he went in, and came out directly, and told which was the man who had robbed him. He ſaid, the mail was delivered to him at Warrington, by the clerk of the Poſt-office, as uſual, to carry to Northwich, which would have been done but for the robbery afore-mentioned. He was croſs-examined very minutely, but no material variation occurred in his evidence. He was aſked, in what manner he came to Cheſter, he anſwered, in the cuſtody of the keeper of the Houſe of Correction of Middlewich, and had been in the cuſtody of a conſtable all the time he had been at Cheſter, to attend the trial; but it turned out that this was only for the ſafe cuſtody of the witneſs, till the trial of the priſoner. On being interrogated reſpecting his ſituation and way of life ſince he was diſcharged from carrying the mail, ſaid, he had lived at a public-houſe in Mancheſter, half a year—afterwards ſerved the bricklayers—and, for the laſt fifteen weeks, had been in the ſervice of Dr. Katterfelto. He was again aſked about being in the Houſe of Correction at Middlewich, ſaid, he had been there twice, and both times in conſequence of the mail;—

" the

" the firſt time they thought I had ſome knowledge of the man, and had ſome concern in robbing the mail." He was aſked about the priſoner offering to give him a guinea to let him ride behind him, which he again affirmed; but ſaid, he had never mentioned it at the time; that he was robbed between four and five miles from Warrington, at a little lane end between Stretton and Whitley, about half a mile from Stretton, and not far from the Wheat-ſheaf. He ſaid, it was not very light, nor any houſe very near; he was aſked very particularly if he had, at the time of the robbery, deſcribed the robber as a little man; the witneſs ſaid, he thought him about five feet five or ſix inches high. Several more queſtions were put to him reſpecting the reward which was offered for the apprehenſion of the robber—and whether he had not ſome expectations of receiving a part, on conviction—or of having received inſtructions from the Solicitor of the proſecution, what to ſay relative to it? The witneſs ſaid, he had heard that there was a reward of two hundred pounds for apprehending the robber, but he did not know that he was to receive any part of it, nor did he want it: the priſoner's counſel ſaid, he ſuppoſed ſuch a gentleman as he could not want money, as he had been with Katterfelto learning to conjure! He replied, he had not learned to conjure, he could work for his living, and all the inſtructions he had received, were to ſpeak the truth, and nothing more.

The next witneſs called was *John Howard*, of Warrington, who ſaid he ſaw the priſoner paſs by his door, in Bridge-ſtreet, Warrington, on Monday the 10th of March, 1788, about eight in the morning, but never ſaw him before; in the evening he went to a public-houſe, and ſat near him by the fire. The mail being robbed the next morning, enabled him to recollect the day. On being aſked if he had any converſation with him,

him, he ſaid, he had not; he only took notice of him as being a ſtranger.

Mr. *George Howard* was next called, who keeps the Py'd-bull public-houſe, in Warrington: he ſaid he remembered the priſoner coming to his houſe on the 10th of March, 1788, about eight o'clock in the morning, got breakfaſt, and went to bed; ſaid he was tired, for he had been walking all night; he got up about two o'clock, and ſtayed till nine at night; juſt before he went away, he called for a glaſs of gin, and ſaid he was not well; afterwards ſaid he was better, and had another glaſs; he then made an excuſe to go into the garden on ſome occaſion, and went away without paying his reckoning.

John Shaw, the carter, was next called, who ſaid he lived about a mile and a quarter from Warrington; that on the 11th of March, 1788, the day the mail was robbed, he ſet out with his cart, about four o'clock, for Northwich, that between Hill-Cliff and Stretton he overtook a waggon; afterwards he met the priſoner, who was on foot, behind his cart, face to face; the priſoner ſtopped, and afterwards went with him towards Northwich. The priſoner ſaid it was a fine morning, and aſked the witneſs where he was going? he told him to Northwich; he replied he was going that way, and kept him company near a mile; and during all that time was never above two or three yards from the priſoner; who, he thinks, is the ſame perſon. On being aſked again reſpecting his perſon, ſaid, he had not the leaſt doubt but he was the man; for it was quite light enough to diſtinguiſh his face. He ſaid the poſt-boy came up, and the priſoner looked back that way, and very ſoon after ſaid, *this will not do for me, I muſt go a little faſter*, or to that effect; and immediately left him, and he ſaw no more of him. The poſt-boy kept company with his cart near two miles, when it became lighter;

lighter; and the boy ſaid he would go a little faſter—that it was ſomewhere about the Farther Stretton, when the poſt-boy left him; he had not been gone long before he overtook him again, but without his horſe, and crying very much; he told him he had loſt his horſe and bags; he went with him more than half a mile, where they found the horſe grazing, which they caught; but the mail could not be found. He was examined on ſeveral of the facts which he had ſtated; and particularly with reſpect to the light and identity of the priſoner; which he ſolemnly affirmed.

The next witneſs called was the turnkey of Cheſter Caſtle *(Daniel Cheſters)* who was preſent when the boy was turned into the gaol to look for the priſoner: he ſaid that the boy, the moment he came out, declared the priſoner was the ſame perſon who had robbed him; that he knew him by his voice, as he was then talking to ſome of the people who were with him.

Samuel Watts was next called: he ſaid he knew the priſoner in March 1788, and two years before; that the priſoner had lived at Cheſterfield about two years, in the name of William Lewins; that he met him on the 22d of March, 1788, between Barnſley and Wakefield, on the road to Leeds; that the priſoner left Cheſterfield on the ſeventh of May, 1788, and on the 20th of the ſame month, the priſoner's houſe was ſearched, and ſome woollen cloth found therein, a part of which he had then in court.

George Roper, of Leeds, merchant, was next called, who ſaid the priſoner came to him at Leeds, on the 22d of March, 1788, ſaid he was recommended to Mr. Roper by a friend at Barnſley, to buy ſome cloth (the kind of cloth produced in court) and ſaid his name was William Brown: he produced ſeveral bills, one of which was for one hundred pounds, but he the witneſs not having caſh enough to change it, he produced another for ſixty-nine pounds five ſhillings and ſixpence (which he

produced in court) and which the priſoner had indorſed with the name of Wm. Brown; the witneſs had marked it, and was certain of it: the priſoner gave orders to Mr. Roper to ſend the cloth directed to him, by the name of William Brown, at Wilſton, near Matlock-bath, Derbyſhire; and it was accordingly ſent by the carrier. The next time he ſaw the priſoner, was at Exeter, in Devonſhire, in the beginning of Auguſt, 1790, and he had not the leaſt doubt as to his being the ſame perſon.

William Hirſt was next called, who is clerk to Mr. Roper, believes the priſoner to be the ſame perſon who came to their houſe on the 22d of March, 1788, and bought the cloth, and that it was the kind of cloth which was found in the priſoner's houſe, and now produced in court. He was croſs-examined as to his knowledge of the priſoner, when he ſaid he well recollected him, and that he called himſelf William Brown.

Robert Jackſon, clerk to Taylor and Wright, of Liverpool, proved the ſending one of the bills (which the priſoner had offered) in a letter, directed to Mr. Joſhua Taylor, Holmes-chapel, and that he put it into the poſt-office at Liverpool.

Thomas Banning, clerk to the poſt-office, at Liverpool, proved that the letters were ſent in the uſual manner, by the mail coach to Warrington, on the 10th of March, 1788, by Thomas Lichfield, the guard.

Thomas Lichfield was then called, and ſaid that Mr. Banning gave him the bag on the 10th of March, 1788, and he delivered it at the poſt-office, Warrington.

William Barker, clerk of the poſt-office at Warrington; on the 10th of March, 1788, he opened the Liverpool bag, ſorted the letters, and put Holmes-chapel letters into the uſual bag, to go by Northwich, and ſent the Northwich bag by the poſt-boy, Thomas Archer,

ther, and that he had delivered it to him a few minutes before four o'clock. The priſoner's counſel examined Mr. Barker ſtrictly, whether he had ſeen the letter in queſtion? He ſaid he had not, could only ſwear to ſending all the letters directed to Holmes-chapel.

James Taylor, of Holmes-chapel, to whom the letter was directed, in which was one of the bills ſent from Liverpool, proved neither letters nor bill ever came to hand.

Ann Crow knows the priſoner very well; ſaid he came to her houſe laſt Eaſter was twelvemonths, to lodge with her, at Beaumaris; ſaid his name was Wm. Hutchinſon. During the time he lodged with her, he was away a fortnight; thinks he was away on the 7th of July: ſoon after his return, ſhe ſaid ſhe told him ſhe had heard that he was the perſon that had robbed the poſt, and that he muſt either clear himſelf, or take his chance; it was ten o'clock at night, and rained hard, notwithſtanding which he went off in about a quarter of an hour.

James Sindry, of Oxford, ſaid the priſoner came to him at Oxford, in order to buy ſome plate, and did buy ſome to the amount of about ſeven pounds, and ſaid his name was William Maule. This was in Auguſt, 1789.

William Sarrel was then called, who is keeper of the Caſtle gaol of Exeter, who ſaid he had apprehended the priſoner on the 7th of Auguſt, 1790, in the pariſh of St. John's, juſt without the gates of the city of Exeter, and he then ſaid his name was Wm. Henry Clarke.

As ſoon as the evidence had cloſed, the Chief Juſtice aſked the priſoner if he had any witneſſes to call, or whether he would make his own defence, or leave it to his counſel? upon which he took a paper out of his pocket, began to open it, and then ſaid he would leave it to his counſel, but directly afterwards read, in

an audible and diſtinct voice. At firſt he appeared rather agitated, but ſoon recovered himſelf, and read the remainder very deliberately and diſtinctly, ſo that every one in court might have heard him. The defence was in the very words following, and in his own hand writing;

" My Lord Judge, and Jury here aſſembled,

" I, an unhappy priſoner, moſt humbly beg your Lordſhip and this Jury, to take my moſt deſperate caſe into conſideration; deſperate indeed to me, for I have been entirely deprived of making any defence for my ſafety; likewiſe very unjuſt advantages have been taken againſt me, contrary I think to law and juſtice; for in September laſt I was removed from Exeter, and brought round the country to Oxford, where Mr. Parkins, the Solicitor, met us, and after aſking me a great many queſtions, brought three men into the room to look at me, bid me ſtand up, and aſked the men, if they knew me? They aſked me, if I knew them? I anſwered, not one of them; aſked me ſeveral queſtions, but did not ſeem to think they knew me; one ſaid he thought he ſaw me about two years ſince; but it did not happen to be a right time, and he was ordered to ſay no more. Mr. Parkins then brought ſome papers, and read ſome of them over to me, ſaid they was of my writing, and he would do all in his power to prove them, and convict me. I ſaid I deſired nothing but a fair trial. He then ordered Mr. Sarrell to bring me round by Derby, and ſaid he had ordered ſome people to meet us at Derby, who knew me better than thoſe at Oxford did: we then ſet out for Derby, and when we came there, Mr. Sarrell brought four or five men into the room where I was, and bid me ſtand up, ſaid I was the perſon who had robbed the mail, and aſked, if they did not know me? there was but one who made any anſwer.—Mr. Sarrell then went with them out of the room, and returned

returned with one of them in about an hour's time; the man then aſked me a great many queſtions, ſaid I muſt know him; I anſwered I did not, neither did I know him. In moſt of the towns on the road, Mr. Sarrell brought people to look at me, and ſaid I was the perſon who had robbed the mail.

Mr. Sarrell likewiſe made me pay my own expences all the way from Exeter to Cheſter.

Likewiſe from the firſt week of my coming to Cheſter, I have been made a public ſhew of; and when I found fault, and ſaid it was very hard I ſhould be made a ſhew of, the turnkey, Mr. Thompſon, ſaid he had orders from the poſt-office to ſhew me to every one, and he ſhould; he likewiſe had uſed to point at me, and ſay—that is the poſt-maſter, him which robbed the mail.

Since Mr. Thompſon left, they have not been ſatisfied with bringing people into the room to look at me; but John Cheſters, the county ſmith, and his brother, have dragged me out of the room, by the heels, into the yard, and ſwore they would make a public ſhew of me.

I have likewiſe never once been admitted to ſpeak a word to any friend whatever, but what the turnkey heard, and was by at the ſame time; nor for this four months and upwards have I been admitted to ſee or ſpeak with any friend whatever.

My money has likewiſe been taken from me, ſo that it ſeems to me that their intention has certainly been to take away my life, whether innocent or guilty, as they have entirely deprived me from bringing my witneſſes for my defence; likewiſe numbers of people have been brought to look at me, and a great many have ſaid they have ſeen me in places, which I declare I was never at in my life, but they all ſeemed to think they knew me, ſeeming to wiſh to get the reward for con-

victing

victing me; for the depravity of man is ſuch, they will ſwear any thing for money; for inſtance, we need but remember the two unhappy ſufferers, Falkner and Brewer, who were executed wrongfully, concerning the Dundee bank:—and however circumſtances may appear againſt me, whether I live or die, I declare myſelf entirely innocent of the robberies of the mail, and leave myſelf entirely to the goodneſs of God, and the mercy of my Judge and Jury."

The Chief Juſtice then ſummed up the evidence to the Jury with the greateſt preciſion, from the beginning to the end, and obſerved, that the priſoner had no room to complain of his not being called to make his defence, for that he had been very ably defended by his counſel; and as to the turnkeys being preſent when any perſon was admitted to ſee him, that was (after what had happened, and what the Jury were perhaps not unacquainted with) by no means improper.

The Jury, after a very ſhort conſultation, pronounced him guilty.

The Chief Juſtice, addreſſing himſelf to the priſoner, ſaid, that after a very impartial trial, before a very attentive jury, he had been convicted upon as clear a chain of evidence, as ever had appeared in a court of juſtice, and of a crime ſo dreadful in its conſequences, that the legiſlature had very wiſely thought fit to puniſh it with loſs of life; for if it was otherwiſe, there would be an end to all commerce; the property of individuals, as well as of the public, muſt be protected; that in aggravation to the offence for which he was convicted, he had been guilty of another, by attempting to make his eſcape from priſon in the manner he had done, and by getting the number of people which he had to aſſiſt him, had nearly brought them into the ſame ſituation with himſelf, and which moſt certainly would have been the caſe, if his eſcape had been effected; and indeed for what

what had already been done, in ſuch an unlawful and unjuſtifiable manner, had it not been for a mere accident which had happened, he had brought on them a very ſevere puniſhment indeed. That ſuch deſperate attempts ſhould always meet with their juſt puniſhment, he therefore entreated him to make the beſt uſe of the very little time which would be allowed him in this world, in appealing to the Almighty, whoſe mercy was infinite; that there only remained for him the painful taſk of paſſing the dreadful ſentence of the law, which is, "That you be taken from hence to the place from whence you came, and from thence, on Thuſday next, to the place of execution, and there be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may the Lord have mercy upon your Soul!"

The priſoner behaved himſelf, during the whole of his trial, in a very becoming manner, but apparently not in the leaſt affected, until the Judge had paſſed the awful ſentence for him to be hanged on the Thurſday, when he was very much affected indeed; it was with difficulty he could ſupport himſelf.

The trial began at a little before eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and was not over till four o'clock in the afternoon. And as to the defence which the priſoner made, the court paid but little attention to it, as it was by no means true:—Mr. Thomas, the gaoler, had behaved with the greateſt humanity and tenderneſs (as it is well known he does on every occaſion) had indulged the priſoner by taking off his handcuffs ſeveral times a day, for him to change his clothes, after he had been obliged to have them rivetted on, and (till after his attempts to eſcape) had ſuffered his wife to be with him very frequently.

PARTICULARS

PARTICULARS

OF THE

LIFE AND CONDUCT

OF

LOWNDS, &c.

IT is extremely difficult to trace this culprit through any of the ſcenes of depredation which he made on the public, much leſs to give a hiſtory of his life; which, ſince his manhood, has undoubtedly been one continued ſeries of crimes and diſſipation, that ſingly merited the death he ultimately ſuffered; but he had the art to elude the eye of juſtice till his apprehenſion, at Exeter, for robbing the mail between Cheſter and Frodſham, in 1789; which, though not legally convicted of, circumſtances ſtrongly prove, as will be ſhewn in the courſe of this narrative, and which have been collected with as much care and aſſiduity as the time and circumſtances would admit:

William Lownds, the ſubject of this paper, was born at Smallwood, in the pariſh of Aſtbury, near Congleton, in the county of Cheſter, the 17th of April, 1759; his father gave him an education ſomewhat ſuperior to his ſituation in life, which was reputable, and his conduct in his buſineſs of a weaver, exemplary and induſtrious. To this employ he trained his ſon, in whoſe conduct nothing remarkable occurs, till his marriage, at an early period of life. Having formed a connexion with a young woman in the neighbourhood, their imprudence became evident, and he was compelled, by the circumſtances, to marry the object of his amour; who, and a daughter which he had by her, are living in that neighbourhood. Reſtleſs in his diſpoſition,

diſpoſition, he ſoon left his family, and, in ſome meaſure his employment, by commencing dancing-maſter; this led him into diſſipation, and gave him a rambling bias. In 1785, he married a ſecond wife, Amy Clarke, of Alfreton, Derbyſhire, by whom he has two children now living. This woman has been his companion in moſt parts of the kingdom, where his depredations or flights from juſtice have driven him; and, as will appear in the ſequel, was acquainted with all his operations;—the chief that have occurred at preſent we ſhall, in brief, relate:—At an early period of life he is ſuſpected of commencing his depredations on the mail, in conjunction with the poſt-boy, between Congleton and Macclesfield; their practice was to examine the letters on the road, take out thoſe which contained property to their liking, and alter the poſt-charges on the remaining letters, ſo as to correſpond with the office-bill; this was continued till the alteration in the poſt-charge cauſed a ſuſpicion, and prevention of a repetition. ---After this ſeveral mail-robberies were committed in the northern counties; moſt of which there is ſtrong reaſon to believe were effected by Lownds; that in 1788, for which he ſuffered, is inconteſtibly proved; out of which he obtained conſiderable property; and the following circumſtances lead to ſhew that he was the perſon who robbed the mail in July, 1789, between Cheſter and Frodſham: About a fortnight before the robbery, he left his wife and family at Beaumaris, and came to a public-houſe in Cheſter; where he reſided ſome days, but went away (after ordering dinner to be provided) without paying his reckoning. The next day (Sunday) he came to Tarvin, a ſmall village about five miles from Cheſter, early in the morning, ordered breakfaſt, and deſired he might lie down, as he was much fatigued; ſaid he loſt his way on the Foreſt of Delamere, and had been travelling all night; he went

to bed, and lay till about eleven, when he got up, and went the ſame way he ſaid he had come; but inſtead of proceeding to the Foreſt, he was ſeen going the road that leads to Dunham-o'-th-hill, the place where the boy was robbed that night; it being dark, no accurate deſcription could be given of the robber; the horſe which he rode off with was all that could lead to a diſcovery. That the day following was found on the Foreſt; the mail was likewiſe found in a moſs-pit, but without its contents, in the evening of that day; it afterwards appeared that he croſſed the country, took poſt-horſes at Barnhill, through a bye-road, to Wrexham; thence proceeded immediately in a poſt-coach to Mold, and from that directly for Beaumaris, a diſtance of much more than one hundred miles, where he arrived in about forty-eight hours after the commiſſion of the robbery. The ſingular conduct of this ſtranger created ſuſpicions in the country; bills were publiſhed, and every means uſed for his apprehenſion; it was from reading an advertiſement of this kind that a gentleman of Beaumaris firſt ſuggeſted to Mrs. Crow, that her boarder, who then ſtood in the entrance of her houſe, was the man who robbed the mail; ſhe went over, and repeated the ſuſpicion to him, as related in her evidence, page 11 of the Trial;—ſhe there ſtates, that notwithſtanding it rained hard, and was near ten o'clock at night, he ſet off in a very few minutes, and was ſoon out of ſight. That night, money and perſuaſion, in defiance of difficulty and danger, procured him a paſſage over the river Menai to Carnarvon; to which place he was afterwards traced, and narrowly eſcaped his purſuers, by leaping out of a window, and croſſing the almoſt inacceſſible mountains of that tremendous country, without ſhoes! His wife, immediately after his departure from Beaumaris, began to waſh, and make every preparation to follow him;—this ſhe did

the

the next day, in a boat, with three men, hired for that purpoſe, which landed her at Bangor; from thence ſhe proceeded to Carnarvon, where every means were uſed to gain from her information of her huſband, but without effect. The boatmen were treated by her with the greateſt profuſion; but, lamentable to relate, her favours were the cauſe of their deaths, as they were all loſt on their return, through exceſs of liquor. From this time we have not been able to trace his reſidence, farther than that it was chiefly in the North of England. On the 25th of February, 1790, he robbed the mail between Penrith and Keſwick; from which he got a bill of five hundred and forty-one pounds eight ſhillings: this he negociated on the 3d of June following, at a banker's in Newcaſtle-upon-Tyne, under the name of William Hope, receiving four hundred and forty-one pounds eight ſhillings, in caſh, and a note of hand for one hundred pounds; which note has not yet been given up, tho' ſtrongly preſſed for it; the only anſwer that could be obtained was, that it would never appear againſt the drawer.

He, his wife and children, during this period, reſided at Hexham, in Northumberland, which place they left the next day, and proceeded, in the mail, to Darlington. Here, after tranſacting ſome buſineſs at the two banks, he left his wife and family, and continued his journey to London, where he arrived on the 7th, and immediately went to Meſſrs. Smith, Wright, and Grey, bankers, where he negociated a bill of exchange, and endorſed his name W. Lownds.

From London he immediately went to Exeter, where he reſided till his apprehenſion; while there he entered into all the amuſements and gaiety of that city—was extremely active in the election of the place—and had given invitation to upwards of twenty gentlemen to take a farewell ſupper with him the evening he was ap-

prehended by Mr. Sarrel; to whom he behaved with the greateſt coolneſs and intrepidity, told him he miſtook his perſon---he was not the man---and would certainly proſecute him for falſe impriſonment;—in the gaol, he wrote a note to his friends, to ſit down to the ſupper which was provided, and make merry, as he ſhould certainly be out the next morning.

From Exeter he was removed by habeas corpus to Cheſter Caſtle;—where he ſoon began to employ thoſe artifices which ſeemed to be interwoven in his nature, to elude the impending arm of juſtice, by eſcaping from the priſon.

A ſhort time after Lownds came to Cheſter, his wife brought him a ſaw with her from Exeter, to effect his eſcape; and early in November, brought two new ſaws and a dozen files, which, though cloſely examined by the gaoler's orders, ſhe delivered to her huſband, having wrapp'd them in cloth, and tied them round her thighs. Early on November 26, his irons, and thoſe of two other priſoners, were diſcovered by the under turnkey to be cut off, which was kept a ſecret by means of the bribe of a guinea. The next evening they were put in that ſtate into the cells, the doors of which were left unbolted, and being ſupplied with matches, a tinder-box, and a candle, from Booth, a debtor, they attempted to cut a paſſage through the iron window of the lower cell, but in vain. The next morning it was agreed, that the under turnkey ſhould make a diſcovery to the gaoler, of the ſtate of the priſoners' irons, and the ſaws, and other implements, were given to Booth for concealment. Soon after, Lewins perſuaded Charles Williamſon, a convict at the works of the caſtle, to bring ſome clay into the gaol, and to take the impreſſions of the keys, in his way to and from the works, which he was enabled to do by the negligence of the under turnkey, who frequently left the keys on a ſtone

near

near the door of the felons' yard. About the 11th of December, Lewin gave Charles Williamſon ten guineas to eſcape from the works, and deliver the impreſſions of the keys to a perſon at Wolverhampton, who was to procure keys to be made from them. Charles Williamſon accordingly eſcaped, but unthinkingly left his yellow jacket at the foot of the caſtle wall, in a pocket of which the impreſſions were inadvertently left. In January Lewins bribed the under turnkey to take another impreſſion of the keys on ſome clay, privately brought into the gaol by his wife, which was effected, and then agreed with Peacocke, a debtor, to aid him in an attempt to eſcape, which was to be undertaken by means of a ſcaling ladder, thrown over into the felons' yard, and the keys to be made from the impreſſions. Peacocke was to ſend his ſon to receive the impreſſions, and two men, acquitted at the January ſeſſions, were to aſſiſt in the attempt. Theſe men were maintained for ſeveral weeks in Cheſter, by Lewins' wife; but they inſiſting on the payment of the caſh agreed upon (viz. twenty guineas each) before they undertook the work, and Lewins refuſing to pay before hand, this ſcheme was laid aſide. Peacocke's ſon came into the Caſtle, and received the clay impreſſions of the keys from Lewins. Old Peacocke's debt, amounting to twenty-nine pounds five ſhillings and ſixpence, was actually paid by Lewins. On January 26, Charles Williamſon was retaken. Peter Maddock, a tranſport, at the end of January, was ſent up to Woolwich, in the care of the turnkey, and county ſmith, who were to return on February the 6th, it was therefore agreed to force a paſſage on Saturday, February the 5th, about three o'clock in the afternoon, through the houſe part of the gaol, as at that time the convicts employed at the works, and their ſuperintendant, were out of the gaol. In the morning of the 5th of February, Lewins' wife

delivered

delivered a parcel to a ſervant girl uſually employed in carrying Lewins' meat, &c. into the Caſtle, which ſhe ſaid was tea and ſugar :—the girl, juſt as ſhe was at the door of the Caſtle, thought the parcel was too heavy for ſuch articles, and prudently returning to a neighbouring houſe, opened it, and found two loaded piſtols concealed therein. Juſt before this time, a bottle of laudanum was privately ſent into the gaol by Lewins' wife, with an intent to give a quantity of it to the turnkey, and, by means of the under turnkey, to the debtors, who ſlept over the felons' cells, as well as to the ſervants in the gaol, if an attempt to eſcape ſhould be agreed upon in the night time. Forty-two drops were actually given in ſome wine, to Thompſon, the turnkey, to try, as they term'd it, *the ſtrength of his head.* The under turnkey went down into the felons' yard, about three o'clock in the afternoon of February the 5th, when the felons threw off their irons, except Charles Williamſon, who went up into the houſe part of the gaol, and enquired for the turnkey, under the pretence of buying ſome potatoes, and then was apparently ironed, but on the turnkey's appearance, ſuddenly knocked him down, and threw aſide his irons; he then gave a ſignal to the other felons, who ruſhed up ſtairs, and Lewins called out, " Damn him, ſecure the key, Charles ;" but Thompſon, *faithful and ſteady to his truſt*, contrived to take the key out of his pocket, and threw it through the window into the Caſtle-yard. Mrs. Thomas, the gaoler's wife, was happily enabled to ſhut the door of her apartments, and to call out for aſſiſtance, which was, to the credit of the convicts at the works, immediately given; and in conſequence thereof, a remiſſion of part of their time has been granted to each of them by the Chief Juſtice, at this aſſizes. Since that time, another ſcheme was in agitation, to blow up the outer door of the condemned room,

room, with gunpowder, where the felons were confined previous to the time of going into the cells; but the felons hitherto in confederacy with Lownds, were not equal to ſuch a daring outrage, and, by information, prevented the terrible event.

It may not be improper here to obſerve, that in about three weeks after giving Thompſon the laudanum, he died rather ſuddenly. When this circumſtance came out, ſuſpicions were entertained that Lownds might have adminiſtered ſomething which had been the cauſe of it; his body was therefore taken up and opened, but there were no appearances to confirm them.

Such were his attempts to eſcape, but, happily for ſociety, all prov'd abortive. During his confinement, he read much in Dr. Dodd's Thoughts in Priſon, and was frequently writing: after condemnation he ſeemed earneſt in preparation, but refuſed to anſwer any queſtions relative to the property he had obtained, the different robberies he had committed, or the juſtice of his ſentence; he deſired the clergyman who attended him, would not preſs him to give anſwers, as he ſhould leave injunctions on his wife to communicate the whole in a day or two after his death. On being aſked, whether he had any thing to ſay againſt the evidence which had been given againſt him? he ſaid no, only that the boy had not told the truth. When aſked reſpecting the bill which was taken out of the mail, he ſaid he found it on the road between two places, which he particularly ſpecified.

Soon after condemnation he was very deſirous to know what they intended to do with his body; when told he was to be gibbetted, he ſeemed more affected than had ever been obſerved before; but afterwards became more reconciled. On Tueſday he took leave of his wife, but on Wedneſday night he wrote her a line, to meet him at the place of execution; which ſhe did, accompanied by his brother; they all knelt down

down in the cart, whilſt he read Dr. Dodd's Laſt Prayer, with the clergyman who officiated, and afterwards ſpent ſome time in private converſation; and giving her a letter out of his pocket, after ſeveral ſtruggles, and many tears, on his part, they finally ſeparated; his brother continued with him ſome time longer, and then left him. He then ſtood up, and, with inceſſant tears, admoniſhed the ſpectators to take warning by his fate; ſaid, "here is a great many people here to-day, but the preſent ſtate of my mind prevents me ſpeaking to them as I could wiſh;—good people, as you regard your own ſouls, and eternal happineſs, bring up your children to fear God, and keep his commandments, and then they will never be forſaken, or come to the ſhameful, ignominious end I am doomed to ſuffer; learn them to ſhun evil, and do good; I pray God grant it, and that he will have mercy on my poor ſoul, thro' Jeſus Chriſt's ſake; good people, let me have your prayers, join with me in prayer to God, to have mercy on my ſoul." He continued in prayer afterwards; and when the halter was fixed, he deſired he might have a little more time, and he would drop his handkerchief as a ſignal; he ſtood ſome minutes in that ſituation, at laſt he dropt the ſignal, and was launched into eternity.

His body is hung in chains on the moſt elevated part of Helſby Tor, about eight miles from Cheſter; from whence it may be conſpicuouſly ſeen, and, by means of glaſſes, is viſible to the whole county, moſt parts of Lancaſhire, Flintſhire, Denbighſhire, Shropſhire, Derbyſhire, *&c. &c.*

Notwithſtanding his declaration to the clergyman, that his wife ſhould publiſh his life and conduct, ſhe left Cheſter without giving one tittle of information; ſo that we have too much reaſon to fear, he died with that duplicity and art which characteriſed him thro' life.

The

The following letters (which are printed literally *from the originals) were received by the keeper of the county gaol; directed (by miſtake) to Mr. Wilbraham.*

" Mr. WILBRAME

" If ever you Experenced the fine feelings of humanity if ever human Writchedneſs melted you to pitty but I have not a doubt but you in your Situation poſeſs both theſe Exelent Virtues then Sir you Cannot beſtow them on a Woman more Truly deſtreſt than hir that is Wrighting to you I have a Favour to aſk for you to deliver to William Lewins this incloſed for Heavin Sake Sir donot deny me Give your ſelf up to a moments reflection think if you had a Child in my Deſtracted Situation would not you do all in your powr to alevate hir anguiſh I am Shure you Woud then my Dear Sir do that friendly kindly Office for me I am ableaged to Solicet the frienſhip of a ſtrainger for it is denyd me at home for this reaſon I am partial to the man I Love above every Earthly Bleſſing deſire him to ſend me an anſwer by return of poſt if he Will not may I beg the favour of you to Wright me a few lines to tell me if you received the Letters in doing ſo you Cannot fail to meet the Aprobation of heavin the Almity God allways Looks With Complaſency on a Good action the favour Will ever be Gratefully remembered by me and you Will have that happy reflection to think you have Greatly releived an afflected heart

jenry 23d 1791

pleaſe to Derect for Mrs Elizabeth Smith at the Foot of Union Lane Sunderland oh Sir With Tears I aſk the favour of you to Treat him With as mouch Lenity as is in your powr and I will ever pray for you

To Mr John Wilbraham Keeper
of Cheſter Gaol Cheſter in
Cheſhire"

" *December* 30 1790

" May evry Good Angel hover round my William and Calm the leaſt diſquietude of his Soul is the Conſtant prayr of your Eliza yours did I ſay yes I am and ever will be yours in every Situation you may Command me I have known a period when we have not been ſo far parted When my preſence Could have made you happy and you have Called on heavin to Witneſs how ſincerely you LOVED me I then was Supremely Bleſt but oh—ſoon tow ſoon the ſmileing proſpect fled and has Left no traces behind but fell Diſpair oh—when I think that a priſon howlds the man the only man on Earth I ever Can Adore reaſon leaves her ſeat and I Give Way to all the horrors that Alludes to ſouch a ſituation I am Diſtracted when I think that you are ſo far of that I Cannot be With you I have no Money to Come with or all the World ſhould not keep me from you What Conciquence is all the World to me if I am to be deprived of you tho another Woman dare Clame you hirs by Law mine is a Superior Clame that of LOVE and Eternal Conſtancy which no powr on Earth Can Change and to my lateſt hour Will Tell how much I LOVE you none ſhall make me believe but that you are Innocent of What you are Confind for put your Truſt in the Allmighty my Love and he I hope Will Comfort you in all your Troubles bear them With patience my Beloved William and follow owr Bleſſed Savours Example as mouch as lyes in your powr he that had no Sin took uppon him the Iniquity of us all I wrote to you before you left Exeter but whether mr Sarrel never received my Letter or he had not that Humanity to Give you it I Cannot ſay but I think if you had ever received it you Woud have ſent me an anſwer one thing I have to deſire of you not to Imbitter your moments of reflection with the thoughts that you have Injured me for I ſencerely forgive you uppon theſe Conditions and its a

ſmall

ſmall requeſt I only aſk an anſwer to this Letter if I am no Longer dear to you if another Woman has poſſeſt that heart that I thought was all my own wright to me in pitty for the Sufferings I have undergon and am now ſuffering for you I know you will wright to me without you are diveſted of that Tenderneſs and Humanitty which you had ſo great a Share of there wants but your refuſall to wright to me to fill the meaſure of my Woes to the brim then ſweet ſoathing Hope will be fled

------- That Anchor of the mind
The only reſting place the Writched find,
On pineing Want it powrs a healing Balm,
Makes Toils ſeem pleaſent and Affliction calm.

I have found the ſenſe of theſe words often but if I'm to be deſarted by you the Whole will be reverſed I have been Ill ſince I begun your Letter but am now better the Allmighty has been pleaſed for his Wiſe reaſons to reſtore me a Little Longer I hope this will find you will and that your health may Continue ſhall ever be the Conſtant prayer of your afflected

jenry 23 1791 ELIZA

direct for mrs Elizabeth Smith Union Lane Sunderland and I am ſure ſhe will Give me the Letter no one knows I have wrote for I have been ſo ill Treated I woud deſpare of receiveing your Letter

To Mr. William Lewins
City of Cheſter Cheſhire"

The annexed very pathetic letter to his wife, evinces an underſtanding and ſenſibility, which, it might have been hoped, would have preſerved him from the ignominious end he met with.

" DEAR WIFE,

" I received your's of Friday morning; I am happy to hear our dear children are well. O my dear, I doubly feel your ſufferings and my own. What ſorrow

can be like mine? Deprived as I am from thy company and that of our dear children, and under the dreadful apprehenſions of ſoon, very ſoon, ſuffering a ſhameful and ignominious death! O my dear wife, I feel and ſuffer more for you and our dear children, than I can expreſs, and was it not for the gracious promiſes of our all-merciful God, I ſhould never be able to bear the afflictions I lie under; but our ever-bleſſed God hath ſaid, leave thy fatherleſs children, I will preſerve them alive, and let thy widow truſt in me. O my dear, this bleſſed promiſe has often given the greateſt conſolation to my afflicted mind; and may the all-gracious God ever preſerve and protect you and our dear children, ſhall ever be the conſtant prayer of your unhappy and unfortunate huſband,

Saturday afternoon. W. C.

Oh! my dear, do not ceaſe praying to God for me, and that he may ſoften the hearts of thoſe who withhold me from ſeeing you, for oh! I long to ſee you. Let me hear from you as often as poſſible; beg of Mr. Dicas to get you leave to ſee me. I am the moſt wretched creature upon earth.

DEAR WIFE,

God only knows with what anxiety of mind I have waited for an opportunity of ſending theſe few lines to thee, my ruined and diſtreſſed wife. Ruined did I ſay? yes, ruined; and by whom? By me, her wretched huſband. Oh! diſtracting thought! And muſt I never, never ſee thee more? thou beſt and moſt faithful of thy ſex. Oh! cruel, cruel men, that thus debar a poor wretch, like me, the only wiſh I have on earth, debar me from the companion of my life, and of my woes beſt ſoother. Oh! had I but taken thy gentle admonitions and cordial advice, I had not, as I am, been doomed a wretch like this, loaded with ignominious chains in this dreary priſon. But what are chains, or bolts, or priſon drear? no, it is not theſe

that

that drive the poiſoned point of torturous thought deep to my heart! 'tis not theſe that lay me proſtrate in the duſt, and drive in ſobs full floods of tears from my eyes! no, it is the calls of an accuſing conſcience, of baſe ingratitude towards God. Conceived in ſin, offending from my youth in every point, tranſgreſſor of the law of righteouſneſs. Oh! hopeleſs, hopeleſs condition for a wretch like me, juſt upon the brink of eternity. Oh! dreadful thought. What plea can I make at that dreadful tribunal, where the ſecrets of all hearts are diſcloſed? How ſhall I ſtand before God in that dreadful day, I who have ſo often, miſerable ſinner that I am, ſo many ways tranſgreſſed againſt light and knowledge—the law of God and man: from man I am ſure to find no mercy; and oh! that my life, being all that the law of men can exact from me, would be a ſufficient ranſom for my ſins! oh! how gladly would I reſign it into the hands of him who gave it. Thou ſees and knows, great Father of the world, with what contrition of heart I lament my ſins; and bleſt be thy tender mercy, God of grace, that 'midſt the terrors of this trying hour—when in this midnight priſon gloom, my inmoſt ſoul hangs naked to thy view, when undiſſembling in the ſecret, I fain would know, explore and balance every thought, for oh! I ſee eternity's dread gates expoſed before me, ſoon perhaps, to cloſe. Be with me, thou all-ſufficient God, in the dreadful trial through which I am to paſs, and graciouſly vouchſafe to fulfil in me thoſe precious promiſes which thou in ſuch fatherly kindneſs haſt delivered to thy afflicted children; enable me to ſee and adore thy diſpoſing hand in this awful but mournful event, and to contemplate at an humble diſtance thy great example, who didſt go forth bearing thy croſs, and enduring its ſhame, under the conſolatory aſſurance of the joy ſet before thee: and oh! my triumphant Lord, in the

moment

moment of death, and the laſt hour of conflict, ſuffer me not to want thine eſpecial care, and ſuffer me not to doubt or deſpond, but maintain me in thy arms of love; and oh! receive me, and preſent me faultleſs to thy Father, in the robes of righteouſneſs, my poor and unworthy ſoul, which thou haſt redeemed with thy precious blood. And oh! my adorable Lord and hope, ſuffer me, in the moſt particular manner, to offer up to thy ſovereign and gracious care, my long-try'd and moſt affectionate wife, and our dear, dear children.—Huſband of the widow and father of the fatherleſs, be thou their ſupport; ſuſtain and conſole their afflicted minds, enable them with patient ſubmiſſion to receive all thy will; and when in thy good time thou haſt perfected them for thy bleſſed kingdom, unite again our happy and immortal ſpirits in celeſtial love, as thou haſt been pleaſed to unite us in ſincere earthly affection. Lord Jeſus, vouchſafe unto them thy peculiar grace and all-ſufficient conſolation. Oh! my Amy, oh! my wife! and is this bitter, with the bittereſt mind, that I muſt loſe thy heavenly company and conſolation ſoothing? Oh, the dreadful thought does wound and ſtab to the keeneſt quick my burſting heart. I have undone thee; and when I look upon the mighty ruin I have pluck'd, pluck'd inſtant on thy head, oh! where can chearfulneſs be found? mine muſt be mourning ever. Oh! my wife! I have undone thee. What the infuriate hand of foes vindictive could not have atchieved, in mercy would not, I have wrought. Thy huſband!—thy huſband loved with ſuch unſhaken truth.---Thy huſband loved with ſuch a ſteady flame.---Even he hath on thee pluck'd, on thee, his ſoul's companion and life's beſt friend, ſuch deſolation as, to view, would draw from the wild ſavage, pity's deepeſt groan. Low on earth, and mingled with my native duſt, I cry;—with all the huſband and the father's anxious fondneſs cry, with all the

the friend's ſolicitude and truth. God of love, vouchſafe thy choiceſt comforts on my dear wife and children, be then my fate's deciſion, to thy will with angel reſignation low we bend. Lord Jeſus receive our ſouls.

Oh, my dear and ever-lov'd wife, I have one earneſt requeſt to make, a requeſt which neareſt touches my heart, and which I am certain thou will be happy to execute: that as long as the Lord pleaſes to ſpare thee, with our dear children, that thou wilt make it thy chiefeſt ſtudy to inſtil into their young minds, the principles of virtue and religion; learn them to know the commandments of God, and keep them; tell them the bleſſings for obedience, and the woeful end of the diſobedient; and, if thou thinks beſt, when they come to years of underſtanding, let them know the woeful end of their wretched father, and let them know that my laſt prayer and bleſſing ſhall be for them, and ſhe, their unhappy and unfortunate mother. Oh! my dear wife, with what earneſtneſs do I pray to God, that he may ſoften the hearts of them that with-hold me from ſeeing thee. I have ſome hopes, through the Almighty's aſſiſtance, that in a little time I ſhall be able to obtain that bleſſing: but the face of things are entirely changed, for thoſe who ſeemed to be my greateſt friends, are now become my moſt inveterate enemies, and deviſe all manner of lies and miſchief againſt me and thee. Thou that is innocent of every thing but that laſt unfortunate affair; but the ungrateful wretches that were in the room along with me, have told the juſtices, that thou brought the ſaws in, tied to thy thigh. Oh! the baſe, lying wretches, for thou neither brought them, nor ever did know that we had ſuch inſtruments. Had the baſe wretches laid the whole charge upon me, I could have borne it and forgiven them, and every enemy I have upon earth. The Lord grant I may meet with the ſame forgiveneſs and mercy from God, that I forgive

give them with. If this comes ſafe into thy dear hands, ſend me a few lines immediately, as I long to hear of thee and our dear children, it would be the greateſt conſolation in this drear confinement, to thy wretched and unfortunate huſband,

W. C.

Thou needs not ſend any direction, for if this finds thee, I ſhall know where to ſend again. I ſhall deſire Mr. Thomas to give me leave to have the letters directed to him, ſo you can encloſe my letter in it, and they will be ſure to give it me when they have read it.

I wrote this ſome time ſince, but never could ſend it to you."

End